

HANDOUT: 3.4 — BEST PRACTICES AND PITFALLS**BEST PRACTICES FOR A FACILITATOR**

- Carefully assess the needs of the members
- Create an open and trusting atmosphere
- Help people understand why they're there
- View yourself as a servant of the group's needs
- Make participants the center of attention
- Speak in simple and direct language
- Work hard to stay neutral
- Display energy and appropriate levels of assertiveness
- Champion ideas that you do not personally favor
- Treat all participants as equal
- Stay flexible and ready to change direction if necessary
- Make notes that reflect what participants mean
- Listen intently to understand what participants are saying
- Give a complex array of ideas coherence by periodically summarizing them
- Know how to use a wide range of discussion tools
- Make sure that every session ends with clear steps for the next meeting
- Ensure that participants feel ownership for the what the meeting has achieved
- End on a positive and optimistic note

PITFALLS FOR A FACILITATOR

- Remain oblivious to what the group thinks or needs
- Never listen to group concerns
- Fail to listen carefully to what participants are saying
- Lose track of key ideas
- Take poor flip chart notes or change the meaning of what the participant says
- Try to be the center of attention
- Get defensive
- Get into personality battles
- Put people down
- Unassertively manage conflict
- Let a few people or the leader dominate
- Never check meeting progress
- Be overly passive on process
- Push ahead on an irrelevant point
- Lack alternative approaches
- Let discussions get badly sidetracked
- Let discussions ramble without proper closure
- Fail to know when to stop
- Be insensitive to cultural diversity needs
- Use inappropriate humor

Source: Hinkey, L. and Engleby, L. (instructors/editors). 2002. Navigating in Rough Seas: Public Policy Issues and Conflict Management. NOAA Coastal Services Center. 28 p.